

Embedded Interventions: Providing support services in basic skills classes to advance student success



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Outline of Presentation



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- Research Design and Methods
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Summary of Research



RQ: “How do embedded interventions offered in a basic skills math class inform college student behavior?”

- Explored how embedded interventions based on social modeling theory (Bandura) provided students with the college know-how needed to be successful
- Examined the impact of interventions modeled by the peer
- Assessed the impact of interventions on the student experience

<http://web.crc.losrios.edu/documents/CeliaEspositoNoy-Dissertation.pdf>

Research Design



- Qualitative research method
- Approach consistent with a bounded case study
- Research participants and setting for this study
 - Six students enrolled in one section of basic skills math (Arithmetic)
 - Class included embedded interventions provided by a peer model working with a professor
 - Conducted at Cosumnes River College, fall 2012

Methods



Data collection methods and coding:

- Student survey
- Interviews with students, peer model, professor
- Classroom and supplemental instruction observations

Organized data and categorized by themes

Embedded Interventions



“Intentional and consistent interactions provided by a peer model in the classroom and intended to inform student behavior” (Esposito-Noy, 2008).

The peer model:

- Demonstrates successful college student behaviors within the context of the course; informs students of the importance of being on time to class, completing assignments, remaining in class throughout the semester, and explains why these behaviors are consistent with successful college students.
- Provides students the college know-how needed to be successful in college by modeling appropriate and productive behavior in the classroom, teaching ways to communicate with faculty, and remaining engaged in class.

What students said about embedded interventions



- **Peer model is accessible and relatable**
 - “She knows what it’s like to be in our place.”
- **Students don’t have to ask what they should be doing in class; they observe the peer model**
 - “I see how she comes in on time, sits down, and has her pencil, paper, and book out and she puts her cell phone away.”
- **No negative association with using support services**
 - “She told us to use the resources ‘cause that helped her.”
- **Students are accountable to each other**
 - “The class is a family.”

Peer Model



- The peer model is a former student from the professor's class who earned an A or B grade
- The role of the peer model is similar to a supplemental instruction (SI) leader
- The peer model teaches students how to interpret the professor's expectations, how to ask for help, etc.
- The peer model advises the professor when students are struggling with a concept

Professor



- Teaches basic skills class and has good rapport with students
- Partners with and supports the peer model in his/her efforts to assist students
- Introduces the peer model and informs the class of his/her role
- Emphasizes the importance of attending supplemental instruction sessions
- Provides study guides or additional material for peer model to use in SI sessions

Students



- Students observe peer model's behavior (taking notes, showing up on time, etc.)
- Students participate in weekly SI sessions
- Students develop rapport with each other
- Students learn how to dialogue with professor
- Students learn college know-how
- Students learn transferable skills (time management, creating a schedule, etc.)

Themes from the study



The following themes emerged:

- Theme 1: The significance of feeling cared for
- Theme 2: The significance of acquiring college know-how
- Theme 3: The importance of setting, maintaining, and clarifying expectations

Findings



1. For nearly all students, feeling cared for informed their behavior and academic performance in the class
2. Nearly all students found the peer model valuable in providing college know-how and demonstrating successful behaviors
3. All students found value in instructor and peer model setting, maintaining, and clarifying expectations
4. Students did not associate quality of teaching with their academic success
5. Professor indicated she was a better instructor because of interactions with peer model

Implications for Practitioners



1. Consider embedding support services within the basic skills classroom to address students' emotional and academic needs
2. Consider including a peer model to inform students of expectations and to provide college know-how
3. Demonstrate care for students
4. Focus on quality of interactions and meaningful experiences
5. Be explicit about expectations for behavior, academic performance, and engagement
6. Support faculty in setting and maintaining expectations and helping students meet them
7. Develop organizational structures that support students (rather than those that are convenient for us)

Improving Student Success



1. Students need to know that they are cared for
2. Students need to experience positive regard and respect (don't hold students to a higher standard than you hold yourself)
3. Do not assume that students know what successful college student behavior looks like
4. Teach students about expectations and support students in meeting them
5. Embed support services into the class
6. Teach students college know-how

Implementing Embedded Interventions



- Requires dialogue and partnership between instruction and student services
- Hire student workers or temporary classified as peer models
- Requires partnership between professor and peer model
- Initial training for peer models and faculty and regular check-ins between professor and peer model
- Costs are minimal

What students learn



- Students observe the peer model taking notes, engaging with others, coming to class prepared, etc.
- Students learn how to approach problems (both academic and personal) more effectively
- Students modify their habits based on the peer model's feedback
- Students learn how to use office hours
- Students learn how to engage appropriately in class
- Students learn new coping skills

Benefits of providing these interventions



- Students interpret that the college cares about them
- Improved student-professor interactions
- Students use appropriate coping skills, self-regulate behavior (fewer behavioral problems)
- Students become self-directed learners
- Benefits last beyond basic skills class
- Successful students become tutors and peer models

Questions and Discussion



Suggested Reading



- Bandura, A. (1977). *Social learning theory*. New York: General Learning Press.
- Carnevale, A. P. & Strohl, J., (2011). Our economically polarized college system: Separate and unequal. *The Chronicle of Higher Education Diversity in Academe*.
- Cox, R. (2009). *The college fear factor: How students and professors misunderstand one another*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Karp, M. M., O’Gara, L., & Hughes, K. L. (2008). *Do support services at community colleges encourage success or reproduce disadvantage? An exploratory study of students in two community colleges* (CCRC Working Paper No. 10). New York: CCRC Teachers College, Columbia University

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